

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1202**

**“RESOLVE, TO ENSURE THE STOCKING OF INLAND
WATERS IN THE STATE”**

SPONSORED BY: Representative DAVIS of PISCATAQUIS

CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator SHORT of PITTSFIELD
Senator CYRWAY of KENNEBEC
Senator DUTREMBLE of YORK
Senator LIBBY of ANDROSCOGGIN
President THIBODEAU of WALDO
Representative CRAFTS of LISBON
Representative HOBART of BOWDOINHAM
Representative MARTIN of SINCLAIR
Representative SKOFIELD of WELD

DATE OF HEARING: May 7, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Michael Brown, Fisheries Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1202**.

Although the Department supports the efforts of the Committee to make money available to the Fisheries Division, this bill instructs the Department to purchase fish for the State's stocking program with funds from its carrying account. This may sound like a great option for supplementing the stocking program, but the reality is that the management of the states hatchery and fisheries management programs are much more complex than purchasing fish for stocking programs. The Department knows from experience what impacts these initiatives have on the Fisheries Division. A similar bill, LD 213, passed in 2011, directed \$200,000 from the State general fund to the Department to purchase fish from private hatcheries.

There are only a handful of private hatcheries in Maine, and only one facility had the interest or capability to provide a meaningful number of fish for the states stocking

program. In 2012, the Department issued a contract for \$78,000 to purchase all fish available from a northern Maine hatchery over the course of two stocking seasons. The cost of these fish was more than \$10 per pound (\$8 per pound raised by DIFW) including partial delivery to a mutual meeting location. The fish were inventoried and transferred onto DIFW stocking trucks and released in various waters by DIFW staff. Although the cost of these fish were more expensive than the fish we raised these fish did not meet DIFW fish quality standards for size and condition, particularly during the fall stocking season, where the most desired product to regional fisheries staff is a fall yearling brook trout. The DIFW size goal on these fall yearlings is 13 inches and 1 pound apiece. It is these older brook trout that need to be held through a second summer concurrently with fingerlings that limits production at DIFW hatcheries. The remaining funds from LD 213 were ultimately used to increase production of smaller 8-10 inch spring yearling fish at DIFW hatcheries and to partner with Nestle Waters in utilizing their once idle Dead River Hatchery in Pierce Pond Township. The Department continues to partner with Nestle Waters to produce brook trout.

The fact is that scheduled requests by fisheries managers for spring yearling trout has generally decreased in recent years due to lack of returns in many waters. When initiatives such as L.D. 1202 arise they obligate the Department to increase the use of spring yearling fish simply because those are the only fish that are available. With regard to fisheries management, the only short term option available is to add fish to existing waters for put-and-take programs. Many of these programs, especially those that use 8-10" fish are already stocked to capacity. In fact many of these fish are not caught by anglers. For practical purposes, this means fewer returns to angler when compared to waters stocked with fall yearling brook trout.

Hatchery management tasks at State or private facilities are planned years in advance. For example, eggs taken in the fall of 2014 are accounted for through the stocking of yearling fish in 2016. Fish need time to grow and it is problematic to follow fiscal year expenditure limitations surrounding sporadic infusions of money to purchase fish. Moreover, the logistics of stocking fish from a private facility are also significantly greater with respect to biosecurity, time scheduling, fish survival, and geographic efficiency.

In lieu of purchasing fish from private hatcheries the Department requests that these funds be available to tackle outstanding infrastructure and capacity issues at existing DIFW hatcheries in order to address the long term need for increased production of larger trout.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.